

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity given to me by the leadership and by the Republican Conference to come and share a few words this afternoon. This is something that we call the Official Truth Squad, and we have been coming to the floor of the House almost every day that we have been in session this year.

We who have organized it are the freshman class. There are about 25, 26 members of the Republican freshman class. We are the new folks on the block. We have been in Congress now for about 14 months. And one of the things that disturbed us so, being here, was the tone of the debate, was the level of incredible partisanship, the remarkable and distasteful distortion of facts, the personal attacks, some of which we have heard within the past 30 minutes. The hyperbole and the disinformation and the misinformation that goes on here in Washington seems to be kind of the order of the day.

What we thought we might be able to do to contribute to kind of raising the level of the rhetoric and the tone is to develop what we call the Official Truth Squad. And our effort and our desire is to try to bring a positive view of America, a truthful view of America, point out some of the wonderful and great things that go on in our Nation and that our citizens are involved in. Because truth is incredibly important to public debate.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, if are you not dealing with truth in the area of public policy, you cannot reach the right solution, you just cannot get to the right end point. That is what is so disheartening about much of the debate that goes on here. And I say that in all sincerity, understanding, as I know my constituents do, that these are not Republican problems or Democrat problems, these are American challenges that all of us face. So truth is so incredibly important.

In my former life, I was a physician, and I knew that if I did not have truthful, accurate information going in to take care of a patient, that I could not make the right diagnosis. If somehow the information was distorted or not accurate, then it just was not possible to get to the right diagnosis.

The same is true in the public policy arena. If we are not talking about truthful items, then it just becomes that much more difficult to reach ap-

propriate conclusions. I know that when I go home and talk to my constituents. They say, do you not get tired of all of that negativity up there? And I do. And I know that you do too, Mr. Speaker.

But that is why our goal is to try to put a little positive spin on exactly what is happening here in Washington and present to the American public an optimistic view of where we are.

And we have in the Official Truth Squad many quotes that we are fond of. One of the ones I am most fond of is one from former New York U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He says, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts." Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but not their own facts.

And it really is so true about much of the debate that goes on here in Washington. Because with many people, everybody obviously has their opinions. But oftentimes they are not supported by facts. And we have heard recently some incredible accusations given about, for example, the Dubai Ports deal.

Now, I am not certain that I support that at all, but I do know that unless you are dealing with truth and with fact, you cannot reach the right conclusion. And one of the things that has come to the floor is this huge accusation that there just has not been any money for port security, that Congress has been delinquent, that the White House has been delinquent, that they are not even paying attention to what is happening at the ports.

Well, here are the facts. Here are the facts. Port security funding in 2001, prior to 9/11, was at a level of about \$250 million. \$250 million. Fiscal year 2006, port security nearly \$3 billion. Nearly \$3 billion. The request for 2007, over \$3.5 billion.

So when you look at the facts, they do not back up the rhetoric of so many individuals who are obviously playing politics. And you cannot take the politics out of politics, I understand that. But it is important that we talk about truth. It is important that we talk about real numbers when we are trying to get to solutions to these incredible challenges that we have before us.

So there are the facts on port security funding. Almost a 700 percent increase since 9/11. Mr. Speaker, that certainly is not inattentiveness to port security funding.

We have also heard recently about the "cuts" in certain budgetary items; and the other side is fond of saying that there are cuts in Medicare and cuts in education. And so what I would like to do today is just share very briefly with folks what the actual facts are, what the truth is.

This is Medicare funding. This is Medicare spending from 1995 to 2005. These are not my numbers, these are Treasury, budget office of the U.S. Government: 1995, \$156.9 billion; 2000, \$187 billion; 2005, \$294 billion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know where you went to school, but I do not

think that they would call moving from \$187 billion to \$294 billion a "cut." It is simply not. And so when people describe it as such, then all they are doing is playing on the fear of the American public. And that does a disservice to the debate. It is dishonest. It does not help get us to the right conclusion. Medicare spending every single year has increased.

Education spending: Many are fond of saying that the amount of money spent on education over the past 5 years has been cut. You have heard them say that. I heard them say that. I always shake my head when I hear it, because if you look at the facts, if you look at the truth, what we have here is total education spending since the year 2000 to 2005 has grown, on average, 9.1 percent each year over the past 5 years.

Those are the facts. That is the truth.

So when you hear people talk about the kind of allegations that they have regarding decreases to, cuts in spending, it simply is not so. What they are talking about it a decrease in the increase; only in Washington is that described as a "cut."

So it is important that we talk about truthful things. It is important we talk about facts, important that we agree on those items before we get to the solution to the remarkable challenges that we have.

Today we are going to talk a little bit about the economy. And if you were just getting your information from the major media markets, the major television stations and the networks, or the major newspapers across this Nation, you might not appreciate that the economy is ticking along pretty dog-gone well. And so we are going to bring some information today, some facts, some truth about the economy, that we hope will be helpful to the debate and also helpful information for the American public.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be joined today by many of my colleagues, and initially, Congresswoman SHELLY MOORE CAPITO from West Virginia. Congresswoman CAPITO is a veteran here compared to us freshmen. She is from West Virginia and has been a real leader in the area of our economy, and a real leader in the area of health care, has been working actively to make certain that health care costs do not continue to skyrocket because they play into our economy to a great degree.

So I am so pleased that you are able to join us. I yield to you and look forward to your comments.

□ 1430

Mrs. CAPITO. I would like to thank my colleague from Georgia for his leadership on so many issues, but also on his leadership of the Official Truth Squad.

I think one of the things that I find when I go back to my home district is people do not get what the real truth is. The way we debate here in Congress, it is almost who can besmirch somebody's character. Who can besmirch